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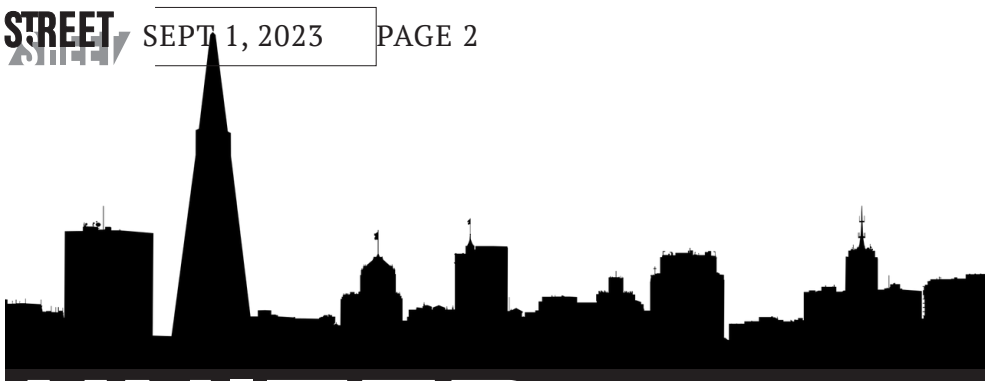

UNITED AGAINST ADVERSITY:

BRIDGING IMMIGRANT STRUGGLES AND HOMELESSNESS FOR A FLOURISHING NATION

JOHANNA ELATTAR

In the vast tapestry of American society, two critical issues intersect, shedding light on the complex challenges faced by immigrants who find themselves grappling with homelessness. The juxtaposition of these two societal concerns has prompted both concern and compassion as communities, advocates, and policymakers seek to address the unique struggles faced by these individuals and families.

Many immigrants' journey to the United States is fueled by hopes for a better life, yet upon arrival, they often encounter a maze of obstacles that can leave them on the brink of homelessness. From language barriers to a lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, immigrants frequently face difficulties securing stable employment, making housing unattainable.

Without proficiency in English, accessing resources, services, and even securing employment becomes an uphill battle. Furthermore, the stigma associated with homelessness often deters immigrants from seeking help, as they may fear deportation or negative judgment.

Despite the challenges, numerous grassroots organizations and community initiatives—including Catholic Charities USA and the National Center for Homeless Education—have emerged to support immigrant populations facing homelessness. These groups provide language classes, job training, legal assistance, and housing support, recognizing that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the intertwined challenges.

Advocates emphasize the importance of inclusive policies that address the unique vulnerabilities faced by immigrants without exacerbating their fears of deportation. Solutions being explored include expanding access to affordable housing, bolstering language education programs, and improving pathways to recognition of foreign qualifications, immigrants frequently face difficulties securing stable employment, which in turn makes housing unattainable.

"As an immigrant, I truly believed when I was coming to this country that people had the tools necessary to live a life that is prosperous, that is just and free," Rep. Ilhan Omar, who arrived in the U.S. as a Somali refugee, said in a 2018 campaign rally. "So, every single day, I am shocked with the hypocrisy of this country. That we are the wealthiest nation in the world. But we cannot figure out how to house our homeless people."

Local communities, nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and citizens all have roles to play in creating a supportive environment for immigrants facing homelessness. By fostering understanding, empathy, and cooperation, society can move towards a more compassionate and equitable future for all its members.

As the nation grapples with these intertwined issues, it is imperative that collective action is taken to address the unique challenges faced by immigrants. Through innovative policies, community support, and unwavering compassion, the United States can strive towards a more inclusive society where every individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive. ■

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COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Street Sheet is published and distributed on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples. We recognize and honor the ongoing presence and stewardship of the original people of this land. We recognize that homelessness can not truly be ended until this land is returned to its original stewards.

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BOGUS PSH SAFETY INSPECTIONS,

OR HOW MY BLUE HAIR DYE BECAME A FIRE HAZARD

JORDAN DAVIS

In late October, I dyed my hair blue as part of a Halloween costume: I was going as death metal singer (and vegan animal rights activist, friend of trans community, and all around girlboss) Alyssa White-Gluz of Arch Enemy. I decided that since I like the color blue, and I have connections to the ocean, I would keep my blue hair permanently. I use Arctic Fox hair dye, which is not only vegan and cruelty free, but also free of harsh chemicals. This will become relevant later.

But I don't write for this paper to wax poetic about my musical tastes or to be a brand ambassador for beauty products. At the August 3, 2023 meeting of the Homelessness Oversight Commission (HOC), I was among several permanent supportive housing (PSH) tenants who presented solutions to the permanent supportive housing eviction crisis, including a redline of a weak policy document by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH). We all presented solutions proposed by tenants and eviction attorneys that would balance autonomy, tenant protections and the safety of the building.

But what made a feature in 48 Hills was how, while advocating for tightening up the criteria for nuisance evictions, I discussed my landlord, the Tenderloin Housing Clinic (THC)— one of the more problematic supportive housing providers.I described how THC has been giving me a hard time, writing me up for having blue hair dye stains on my bathtub, and falsely claiming that the dye is a fire hazard.

This highlights a major issue with THC and other providers:the landlords' monthly habitability inspections. The providers claim that these inspections, which are done in conjunction with "pest control", keep the building safe. However, inspection findings are often used punitively to build a case for eviction, to harass tenants that the building manager may not like, and to retaliate against those who are publicly critical of the provider. There could be a situation where if a tenant's unit is otherwise habitable but not necessarily "cover of Good Housekeeping" material, they could get written up.

The Department of Public Health has guidelines for inspections, but it is left at the landlord's discretion to interpret them, and when a tenant gets a violation, they can't appeal it, leaving little recourse to deal with abuse of power by the building manager.

Over the past eight years of living in PSH, I've seen people get cited over small things, like having shoes under their bed or "missing a spot," as well as for issues out of the tenants' control, such as clogged toilets and roaches.I've gotten some of these citations as well. The Department of Public Health has guidelines for inspections, but it is left at the landlord's discretion to interpret them, and when a tenant gets a violation, they can't appeal it, leaving little recourse to deal with abuse of power by the building manager.

I know that I am getting harassed and retaliated against. I am a non-binary trans femme who dyes her hair blue, has a nose piercing, frequently dresses in black, and is perceived as being youthful. I also have a long history of PSH tenant advocacy, which has involved being a vocal critic of my landlord. My building manager is an older, more conservative Italian male who may not like who I am and what I stand for, and wants me out.

When I got dinged for my blue hair dye, I went to Supervisor Dean Preston's office to complain, and while his aide was concerned, she told me to contact the Housing Rights Committee. When I did, the tenant counselor told me to file a grievance with my provider, but that meant I was required to file a complaint with the same manager that wrote me up. This sounds almost as sketchy as the fact that the same provider also gets an exclusive contract with the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) to run the Central City SRO Collaborative, which is supposed to be an independent watchdog to help tenants assert their rights, but is run by serial evictors. Conflict of interest much?

I filed a grievance and, as of press time, have yet to hear back. The internal grievance process is done on paper within THC, and staff told me to save documents; this was reminiscent of the same DBI who still had, as of September 2020, a paper-based process for permits. HSH also has a policy of requiring PSH tenants to exhaust all internal procedures with the provider before filing a grievance with the department. Those that are formerly incarcerated may feel a sense of familiarity, as this "exhaustion" requirement seems clearly inspired by the Prison Litigation Reform Act, which made it more difficult for people in prison to get justice. If processes for us PSH tenants to seek redress of grievances are based on carceral systems and processes in departments that have been involved in multiple corruption scandals, then there is a real problem here.

So, what is the solution? I personally think that habitability inspections should be ended or severely curtailed, especially in step-up buildings, as it does not serve a purpose other than to make it easier to evict tenants, and is an example of punishing the poor. A City Hall staffer confided in me that they live above a restaurant and thus have to have their unit sprayed frequently, and no other class of tenants has to deal with these inspections. The City must also adopt the recommendations that PSH tenants presented at the HOC meeting, which include limiting nuisance evictions to substantial nuisance having a clear impact on other tenants and requiring pre-eviction arbitration, as well as ending internal grievance processes, and possibly, as an equity measure, giving PSH tenants the right to counsel for issues relating to harassment, retaliation, health, safety, and autonomy. Why should the right to counsel only apply when faced with eviction, which is an expensive process in and of itself, not to mention that it strains emergency systems?

Also, if these providers are continuing to harass and evict tenants for frivolous reasons, there needs to be real accountability, including the City cutting ties with the nonprofit and a just transition into new housing that doesn't cause tenant displacement. We have been dealing with these issues for 20 years, and we've had enough of the lack of accountability. ■

Jordan Davis (she/they) is a permanent supportive housing tenant advocate who has successfully fought for a 30% of income standard in PSH and is working on PSH eviction protections, and may be contacted at 30rightnow@gmail.com

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WRITING: We are always looking for new writers to help us spread the word on the street! Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood!

ARTWORK: Help transform ART into ACTION by designing artwork for STREET SHEET! We especially love art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power! Cover dimensions are generally 10x13 but artwork of all sizes are welcome and appreciated!

PHOTOGRAPHY: Have a keen eye for beauty? Love capturing powerful moments at events? Have a photo of a Street Sheet vendor you'd like to share? We would love to run your photos in Street Sheet! Note that subjects must have consented to being photographed to be included in this paper.

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OPEN LETTER TO SUPS. DORSEY, ENGARDIO, AND MANDELMAN

COH statement, published in 48 Hills on Aug. 21

We know you and many of your constituents are frustrated with the presence of unhoused people in your districts. So are we.

We are suing the city on constitutional grounds for the persistent, horrific practice of violating the law by destroying unhoused people's property and threatening, citing, fining, and arresting them just for the supposed crime of being too poor to afford a home in the face of skyrocketing rents across the city.

We have over 400 people on the waitlist for shelter. While the city says only 50 percent of people in sweeps accepted shelter, they only had enough beds to offer 50 percent of encampment residents.

Our hope for this lawsuit is that it will spark a transformation of our street response to the homelessness crisis–one that actually results in people being able to exit street homelessness.

Our hope is that this lawsuit will lead to more shelter beds and more affordable housing for homeless people.

If we get that it will be a win for homeless people and housed people alike.

For decades, local municipalities have used police to manage the mounting humanitarian crisis that is mass homelessness in an America of rapidly expanding inequality and housing instability. This hasn't worked.

The federal government found it doesn't work.

Study after study found it didn't work.

We believe it is time for San Francisco to shift gears and stop holding onto failed strategies.

Simple solution: Let's work together to get the city legally compliant and the homeless situation dramatically reduced by supporting solutions that work; shelter beds and housing. Support the common sense solutions already brought forward by us within the lawsuit and the recently proposed settlement. Because that is the path to a San Francisco without street homelessness.

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS ET AL V. SAN FRANCISCO:

ONE WEEK, TWO DATES IN COURT

TJ JOHNSTON

A lawsuit over San Francisco's sweeps of homeless encampments continued as two separate hearings were held last week.

Those hearings may end up being a prelude to more action in court if the lawsuit comes to trial. Along with seven unhoused plaintiffs, the homeless advocacy organization—which also publishes Street Sheet—accused City workers of violating unhoused residents' rights and destroying their property while clearing camps off the streets.

On August 23, both sides argued before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, as the City appealed a preliminary injunction barring the City from sweeps while the lawsuit is in progress. At issue was how the injunction defined "involuntary homelessness"—specifically, whether it applies to someone who refuses shelter for any reason when the City sweeps an encampment. The injunction prohibited the City from enforcing certain penal codes—particularly state and municipal bans on sleeping on the streets—in cases when it had no shelter available. As of press time, the three-member panel of judges hasn't issued a ruling.

On the following day, August 24, in the U.S. District Court of Northern California, U.S. Magistrate Judge Donna Ryu denied the plaintiffs' motion to appoint a "special master" to monitor homeless operations and ensure that the City complies with the injunction.

"It became more clear how false the City's claims are that the lawsuit is 'holding them hostage,'" the Coalition posted, referring to the mayor's comments. "One judge noted that the City's arguments appeared to be 'manufactured'—in other words, not real and just mere political theater."

Ryu said the plaintiffs didn't provide enough clear evidence showing that the City violated the previous order by threatening to arrest unsheltered people if they didn't move along.

"There's a pretty significant gap of information concerning violations of the injunction that continue to persist," she said.

However, Ryu gave both sides until September 22 to file new declarations with additional information. She ordered the plaintiffs to show more details about their assertions of City workers threatening to arrest street dwellers. At the same time, she called for the City to provide information on how San Francisco Public Works trains staff on the department's "bag and tag" policy and how police inform homeless people of their rights during these operations. She also asked for police data on homelessness-related calls.

Two weeks earlier, the City rejected the plaintiffs' offer to settle out of court. Zal Shroff, an attorney representing the plaintiffs, pointed out the lack of available shelter and housing for unhoused San Franciscans at an August 10 press conference. As of publication time, the City's waitlist for the shelter system has more than 400 people on it, while the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing reports that there are just about 3,000 beds for 7,000 unhoused CIty residents.

According to the Coalition on Homelessness, this gap reflects a human rights crisis. In a thread on X, formerly Twitter, the Coalition wrote, "We offered a hand in collaboration, but the City's reluctance to work together is troubling. We believe in a solution where compassion and human rights lead the way."

The Coalition commented in the same thread on the City's rejection of the settlement offer, and criticized the City's support for protesters who rallied outside the 9th Circuit's courthouse urging the injunction to be lifted. Mayor London Breed appeared at the rally and slammed the Coalition.

"It became more clear how false the City's claims are that the lawsuit is 'holding them hostage,'" the Coalition posted, referring to the mayor's comments. "One judge noted that the City's arguments appeared to be 'manufactured'—in other words, not real and just mere political theater."

The Coalition added that the panel rejected the City's arguments of its inability to enforce any homelessness ordinances.

A trial date has been set for April 15, 2024.

POLITICAL BACKLASH DELAYS OPENING OF OVERDOSE PREVENTION CENTER IN SAN FRANCISCO AGAIN

SETH KATZ

At the heart of San Francisco's ongoing struggle with drug-related issues lies a promising yet elusive solution: the establishment of overdose prevention (ODP) centers. While public health experts and advocates champion these centers as vital tools for mitigating the harms of substance use, attempts at opening them have been marred by political backlash and indecision. The result is a troubling gap between ODPs' potential benefits and the concrete actions taken to bring them to fruition.

The premise behind ODPs is simple yet impactful. These facilities offer a supervised environment where individuals can consume drugs in the care of harm reduction professionals and medical experts. With essential resources such as oxygen and naloxone on hand, ODPs provide a space for people who use drugs to receive sterile equipment, medical attention and access to referrals for services like HIV care, hepatitis C virus treatment and medication-assisted treatment. The ultimate goal is to mitigate the risk of overdoses and other drug-related harms, consequently relieving the burden on emergency services and removing open drug scenes from the public eye. Public health authorities and officials have rallied behind these centers, especially in New York City and Canada, recognizing their potential to save lives and alleviate the strain on critical resources.

However, the seemingly straightforward solution has become caught in a complex web of politics and divergent viewpoints. Despite a mounting body of evidence demonstrating the success of such centers in other regions, San Francisco's endeavor to establish these life-saving spaces has encountered significant hurdles. As the city grapples with this nuanced challenge, it's becoming clear that the path to implementing ODPs isn't necessarily a straight line

The most recent controversy surrounding San Francisco's ODPs stems from Supervisor Matt Dorsey's proposal to reallocate $18.9 million from these centers toward jail settings.

Despite a mounting body of evidence demonstrating the success of such centers in other regions, San Francisco's endeavor to establish these life-saving spaces has encountered significant hurdles. As the city grapples with this nuanced challenge, it's becoming clear that the path to implementing ODPs isn't necessarily a straight line

However, before diving further, it's crucial to contextualize ODPs and their significance in San Francisco. The now-closed Tenderloin Linkage Center—which later became just the Tenderloin Center—serves as a familiar reference point for many residents and has played a pivotal role in discussions surrounding supervised consumption and harm reduction. Established as an emergency response to surging drug overdoses, the center offered essential services to City resources. However, it also faced criticism, with some alleging it functioned as an unsanctioned ODP. Its closure in December 2022 reverberated across the landscape, leaving those who relied on its services in a challenging predicament. The Department of Public Health's plan to establish smaller linkage sites remains uncertain, while Mayor London Breed's office continues to flip-flop between public health and policing approaches.

In a recent SF Chronicle article, Supervisor Hillary Ronen emphasized the impact of the linkage center's closure on other San Francisco harm reduction initiatives. She highlighted the increase in demand for voluntary services: "[...]The request for voluntary services at the one harm reduction center that currently exists has risen from 150 people a day to 500 people. These are 500 individuals with a drug addiction illness seeking voluntary help every single day from just one center in his district that cannot meet the demand. The funded wellness centers are designed to meet this demand."

The challenges surrounding the establishment of ODPs are multifaceted. At its core, a combination of stigma and fear intersect with funding sources and allocation methods, complicating the process. The journey towards implementing ODPs in San Francisco has been a roller-coaster with highs and lows that reflect the city's evolving approach to harm reduction. Pivotal events, such as Gov. Gavin Newsom's veto of SB57, a bill that would have allowed San Francisco and other cities to operate ODPs, and Mayor Breed's ever-shifting stance, have indelibly shaped the trajectory of this critical initiative.

In 2020, Mayor Breed's office touted the potential life-saving impact of safe consumption sites. However, despite her vocal support for ODPs, her budgetary priorities have prompted scrutiny. While affirming the importance of safe consumption sites, her decision to allocate significant funds to policing—marked by a stark increase in the police budget from $50 million to over $700 million this year—sparked discussions about the city's true priorities. Mayor Breed's policies have also sparked debates on whether coercion or voluntary treatment is more effective in addressing substance use. Her advocacy for arresting and forced treatment for people who use drugs underscores the delicate balance between harm reduction ideals and the pragmatic concerns of public sentiment and resource allocation.

The pursuit of overdose prevention centers in San Francisco is indeed a bumpy road, where progress is ever entwined with challenges. The evolving nature of this journey illustrates how policy, public health and community dynamics intersect As San Francisco navigates this path, it grapples with the vital task of transforming ideals into practices that effectively address the drug crisis while also upholding the dignity and autonomy of its residents .

Seth Katz (he/they) is a San Francisco-based harm reductionist. He works and lives in the Tenderloin and is deeply impassioned about transformative justice, low-barrier access to care and meeting people where they're at.

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Vendors pick up the papers for free at our office in the Tenderloin and sell them for $2 apiece at locations across the City. You get to keep all the money you make from sales! Sign up to earn extra income while also helping elevate the voices of the homeless writers who make this paper so unique, and promoting the vision of a San Francisco where every human being has a home.

TO SIGN UP, VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 280 TURK ST FROM 10AM-4PM ON MONDAY-THURSDAY AND 10AM-NOON ON FRIDAY

AVOIDING VIOLENCE

JACK BRAGEN

At some point in our lives, we are likely to live through physical danger. In some instances, the danger comes from a potential attacker. The typical attacker does this either because they gain some form of sustenance from it, e.g., a mugger who makes a living at it, or someone does this simply because they can. This piece discusses scary situations where there is a threat or a perceived threat of physical attack.

Ironically, one of the best ways to prevent a person from attacking is to be unready for it. If you aren't expecting an attack, your body will give out peaceful messages, and this does a lot toward stopping a potential attacker. It does not work in all instances, but it works in some.

I think you will find that a different response is required for various situations and potential attackers. In this work, I have attempted to provide some material for the unhoused and some for the housed.

When I was in my twenties, I got into a couple of fights, and I have an unhealed fracture in my left eye socket as a souvenir. It causes pain and sometimes difficulty in focusing. I also have an issue with an injured right ankle, and I never saw a doctor for it. When in your twenties, you are young, but that is not an excuse to participate in violence, including when the other person tries to initiate it.

If you are unhoused, it seems as though the jeopardy is tenfold. Housed people can get into their car and lock the doors. They can get into their house or apartment and lock the doors and windows. They can get on the phone and call the cops. Unhoused people may not be able to do any of that. Thus, it may take massive street smarts and bravery, as well as a close-knit community, to deal with an attacker. In some instances, police officers who are sworn to "protect and serve" are some of the attackers.

First, you should validate your feelings if a person or situation frightens you. You don't need to justify that. A threat could be real, or it could be perceived; you're scared, and there is nothing wrong with that. It's valid. I get scared of people and situations, even though I'm a 220-pound, physically strong man. We all have a right to be afraid.

In part, I'm discussing de-escalation such that it never reaches the point of an attempted attack. De-escalation is based on the concept that on both sides of a disagreement, protection is desired, and fear exists. In other words, you could have two sides of a conflict, and both of which sincerely believe they are only defending themselves, and both sides are correct. Does this seem baffling to you? Maybe so, but I believe that's how it is.

De-escalation can involve numerous methods aimed at turning an enemy into an adversary or opponent, then into an associate, and then into an ally. This can happen only when neither side of a conflict is predatory.

When dealing with a predatory entity, you either need a strong deterrent,or else you need to get the hell out of there. An example of a deterrent could be the presence of a surveillance camera. A camera may seem Orwellian, and it probably is. But why not take advantage of what's there? Surveillance cams aren't going away, and they can record events.

Repeatedly in my life, predatory individuals have targeted me. Rather than dealing with them through force, I've learned to use my wits.

Over a year ago, I was driving home from a drugstore when I suspected a car was following me. I turned into a fast-food place, and so did they. I saw that it was apparently a carload of college students. Then I went to the exit driveway of the parking lot of the fast-food place, and so did the other car. Then I turned and went to an adjacent entrance of the parking lot, and at that point I was behind them, when they were still oriented toward the exit driveway where I'd just been. This was confusing to their small minds.

I looked at them in a kindly, superior mode. They got more confused and drove off. It is possible they had recognized me from the internet.

In a past apartment building, I had a neighbor who'd been incarcerated a lot and who often relied on intimidation to get his way. I don't go for that; I don't let myself get dominated by someone bigger, stronger and more forceful. I just can't go there. At some point, he tried to get aggressive with me and I gave it right back to him. It doesn't matter if you're smaller, older or unprepared to fight—sometimes you have to stand up for yourself.

Once you've reached the point of shedding your fear, it becomes possible to stop being so paranoid about supposed enemies, and you can make peace with those who are not predatory and who just want to defend themselves.

Fear is an emotion, and it can potentially be switched off if you know how. Absence of fear doesn't mean you can overcome an attacker. Absence of fear is simply no more than that. I'm afraid of a lot of things. Yet in some limited areas, I've been able to overcome the fearfulness.

Mindfulness works best dealing with one situation at a time. You normally can't flip a master switch and become "attained" in all areas of life. For most meditation practitioners, "enlightenment" happens in bits and pieces, a little at a time.

When in your car, and you see a scary person approach, you could quickly lock your door with your power locks. If you expect never to see the person again, that's fine. But if you have to deal with that person on an ongoing basis, you have created hostility.

Locking your door delivers the message, "You are bad news," and might not be well received. It is a snap judgment, and it is up to you to decide. On the other hand, you could as a policy lock your doors as soon as you get into your car, and this will prevent the aforementioned provocation.

Recently I was in my car smoking and a particular man approached my car. A week earlier, the same man had asked me if he could buy drugs. As soon as I recognized him, I shut my door—it had been opened for cool air—and I locked the power locks. He approached and yelled at me for about five minutes, then walked away. The man hasn't bothered me since. It was offensive but not to the point where he would come after me. Other people could react differently.

Dealing with predatory violent people
The closing scene of the movie "Witness," with a masterful performance of Harrison Ford, whose character hid among the Amish, was quite moving. It showed the power inherent in not keeping secrets. While having surveillance cameras may seem like Big Brother watching you, they have good purpose and good use if they are used as intended and not abused.

Human beings have a right to privacy. Yet human beings also lie, and surveillance cameras don't lie. When an area is on camera, a violent crime could be less likely.

Having surveillance cameras in your living room is going a bit too far. In recent practice of police departments, they have access to the cameras in people's homes. Outside of the home, however, it could be a good idea. It would provide a record of anyone breaking into the home through the front door.

When defending oneself nonviolently, thinking clearly is a precondition. This can be done. I have been able to lessen my fear to the extent that I think clearly when in danger.

It matters that you are aware of your surroundings. If you see an unknown person and they appear frightening but not bullying, a disarming phrase, like "Good morning," can help.

But if that unknown person seems bullying and wants to scare you, you don't owe them anything. Just walk by them and ignore them. They are worth ignoring.

If you instinctively feel in danger, it helps to gather more information about the possible threat. If you are in a car, you can drive around the block to see if there are individuals getting ready to mug you when you're getting out of your car.

A running car with headlights, a horn, power locks, and so on, is a great tool of self-defense. I understand that many unhoused people don't have a car, but some do, and can use their vehicle to their advantage.

If in traffic, perhaps avoid matching speed with surrounding cars. When cars hang around in a blind spot, you don't have space to make an abrupt evasive maneuver, one that could be vital to not colliding with something or not hitting a pedestrian.

Having a cell phone entails a mailing address, payment, protecting the electronics, and keeping it charged. If you can manage all of that—and maybe you can devise a system for it if you are unhoused—a phone is a great tool for documenting police abuses of power. It can also serve for communication, which means a lot. A cell phone is essential for being housed, and it could be seen as an essential first step in a possible ladder of becoming re-housed.

Learning martial arts for self-defense isn't going to serve you very often. It could increase the likelihood of getting into a brawl. Having a weapon of any kind is not advisable. Insofar as your legs work to run away, you should use them for that purpose. In California, we don't have "stand your ground" laws—instead, we have laws that favor those who don't want to fight.

Finally, having friends nearby who can help stand up for you, and vice-versa, means that an attacker is much more likely to leave you be. ■

Jack Bragen is author of "Jack Bragen's 2021 Fiction Collection" and other works, and lives in Martinez, California.

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TUESDAYS @ NOON
The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone! Email mcarrera@cohsf.org to get involved!

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKING GROUP
WEDNESDAYS @12:30
The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join! Email lpierce@cohsf.org

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO JOIN OUR WORKING GROUP MEETINGS!

ArtAuction23

Housing is Harm Reduction

Music by Orchestra Gold

Transforming Art Into Action

THURSDAY SEPT 07 ✨ 5:30 - 10pm

✨ SOMArts Gallery